

# Officiating Philosophies

## Blocking

1. Takedowns at the POA, those in the open field, and those affecting the result of the play create special focus and will be called in these situations.
2. If there is a potential offensive holding but the action occurs away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, offensive holding will not be called.
3. If there is a potential for defensive holding but the action occurs away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, defensive holding will not be called.
4. For blocks in the back, if one hand is on the number and the other hand is on the side and the initial contact is on the number, it is a block in the back. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner.
5. A grab of the receiver's jersey that restricts the receiver and takes away his feet will be defensive holding, and could also be DPI.
6. Holding can be called even if the quarterback is sacked as it may be the other half of an offset foul.
7. Illegal block in the back can still be called on fair catches, but not if the illegal block occurs away from the play as the fair catch is being made.
8. Blocks in the back that are personal foul in nature will be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch or runner being tackled.
9. Rarely will you have a hold on a double team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
10. When in doubt if an illegal block occurs in the EZ or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

## Line of Scrimmage

1. An offensive player is "on his line of scrimmage" at the snap when he faces his opponent's goal line with the line of his shoulders parallel thereto and his head breaking the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper.
2. Officials will work to keep offensive linemen legal and will call only when obvious or where repeated warnings are ignored. Don't wait till the 4<sup>th</sup> qtr to enforce rule.
3. If the offensive player is lined up with his head clearly behind the rear end of the snapper, a foul will be called without a warning.
4. An offensive player who is a wide receiver or slot back will be given leeway in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage, but to be on the line of scrimmage his feet must be within two yards of the neutral zone. Don't be technical. When in doubt, it is NOT a foul.
5. Wide receivers that are the end man on the line of scrimmage must be on the line of scrimmage and break the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper when the defensive player is in "press" position or they will be ruled in the backfield.
6. Wide receivers or slot backs lined up outside a tight end will be ruled on the line of scrimmage and covering the tight end if there is no stagger between their alignments. If in question, he is not covered up.

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7. Defensive linemen moving forward at the snap must actually be in the neutral zone to be called for offside. Moving forward on their side of the neutral zone is not a foul.
8. When in doubt regarding player position on movement by the defense into the neutral zone which causes the offense to move, DOF will be called if within two players of the defensive action.
9. Anytime a defensive player shoots the gap, and there is a questions as to contact, err on the side of offside and shut the play down to avoid a free shot on the QB.
10. Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.
11. If the motion man is clearly angling forward while in motion at the snap, this is a live-ball foul unless there is an abrupt forward movement.

## Pass Interference

### Defensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball is defensive pass interference provided the other requirements for DPI have been met, regardless of how deep the pass is to the receiver.
2. Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
3. Grabbing a receiver's arm(s) in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
4. Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is playing the ball.
5. Cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.
6. Hooking a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that is causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.

### Not Defensive Pass Interference

Actions that do not constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Incidental contact by a defender's hands, arm or body when both players are competing for the ball or neither player is looking for the ball. If there is any question whether contact is incidental the ruling shall be no interference.
2. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.
3. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the pass is clearly uncatchable.
4. Laying a hand on a receiver that does not restrict the receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
5. Although possible contact must be clear and obvious on a "Hail Mary" pass to rule pass interference.

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## Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off thus creating a separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
2. Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
3. If the pass has not been thrown and the block occurs anywhere down field, call OPI if the pass subsequently crosses the line of scrimmage (except #4 below).
4. If the pass has been thrown and a block occurs in the overlapping third of the field where the ball is thrown, call OPI.
5. OPI for blocking down field can be called even if the passer is legally grounding the ball.
6. A catchable pass is a requirement to have OPI on a thrown ball.
7. Both feet of the offensive player must be beyond one yard of the LOS for OPI to be called if all other criteria are met.

## Not Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that do not constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Incidental contact by a receiver's hands, arms or body when both players are competing for the ball or neither is looking for the ball.
2. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.
3. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the ball is clearly uncatchable by involved players.
4. OPI will not be called on a screen pass where the ball is overthrown behind the LOS but subsequently lands beyond the LOS and linemen are blocking downfield.
5. On a look-in pass where contact is shoulder to shoulder.
6. It is not OPI on a pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs.

## Pass Interference Notes

1. If there is any question whether player contact is incidental, the ruling should be no interference.
2. Defensive players have as much right to the path of the ball as eligible offensive players.
3. Pass interference for both teams ends when the pass is touched.
4. There can be no pass interference at or behind the line of scrimmage or if the pass does not cross the neutral zone, but defensive actions such as tackling a receiver can still result in a penalty for defensive holding.
5. Both players have a right to the ball and there must be "an obvious intent to impede" to rule pass interference.

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## Passing Situations

1. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining if a pass (untouched) is beyond the line, however, don't be technical on this.
2. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining ineligible receivers, however, don't be technical on this.
3. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining if a pass is touched beyond the neutral zone. No part of the players body shall be within the one yard expanded NZ.
4. For the passer to be ruled beyond the line of scrimmage when he releases the ball his entire body and ball must be beyond the neutral zone.
5. If a receiver who is airborne controls the ball and is either contacted or falls to the ground on his own, whether in-bounds or out-of-bounds, he must maintain control of the ball through his fall to be awarded a catch. If ball never touches ground, receiver can regain control as long as he remains inbounds.
6. When in doubt on action against the passer, it is roughing the passer if the defender's intent is to punish.
7. For contact to the front of the passer, when there are two steps taken by the defensive player before contacting the passer it is a foul.
8. When in doubt if a player has a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball, he does.
9. On passes beyond the line of scrimmage, when in doubt, the pass is backward.
10. On simultaneous catches, who ever comes up with the ball gets the ball.
11. Hits above the shoulder on the quarterback with anything, i.e. hand, helmet, etc. is a foul.
12. The quarterback can throw the ball anywhere if he is not under duress, except spiking the ball straight down. The clock is not a factor.
13. If the quarterback throws the ball within one yard of the line of scrimmage and he is outside the tackle, the pass is considered close enough to the line of scrimmage. Don't be technical.
14. Catch - If the ball touches the ground in the receiver's hands, any loss of control of the ball makes the pass incomplete; if there is no loss of control after contact the ground, it is a catch.
15. Hits on defenseless receivers above the shoulders are always a foul.
16. If an interception is near the goal line (inside the 1-yard line) try and make the play a touchback.
17. To be ruled a catch the receiver must be able to demonstrate and maintain firm control of the football. When in doubt if the player establishes firm control, he has not.
18. Be definite on catch before giving catch-fumble ruling. If there is any question, rule incomplete.
19. On passes behind the line of scrimmage, when in question, they are forward passes.
20. If no official sees that the ball has hit the ground, rule the pass complete.
21. If the passer is legally throwing the ball beyond the line to save a loss of yardage, do not penalize the offense for having ineligible receivers down field.

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## Kicking

1. The kicker's restraining line on onside and short pooch kick-offs will be officiated as a plane and any player (Other than the kicker or holder) breaking the plane before the ball is kicked will be called for offside. For deep kick-offs, we will also use a plane, but do not be technical.
2. If the kicker runs out of punt formation prior to punting the ball he loses his roughing protection unless he re-establishes as a punter. A personal foul may still be called if warranted, but not roughing the kicker.
3. If the kicker runs out of punt formation prior to punting the ball he loses his roughing protection unless he re-establishes as a punter. A personal foul may still be called if warranted, but not roughing the kicker.
4. On normal field goals, no more than five (5) seconds will be run off the clock.

## Runner Down

1. When in question, the runner fumbled the ball and was NOT down.
2. Don't knit-pick plays at the goal line pylon. If in question on plays at the pylon, rule touchdown.
3. When in doubt, it is a touchdown.
4. The ground cannot cause a fumble but it can cause an incompleteness.
5. If contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out-of-bounds, legal hit.
6. Runner continuing down sideline: If whistle has blown and player has eased up then this is a foul. Be alert and be sure any action is not part of the initial play before calling a foul.
7. A runner crossing the goal inside the pylon with the ball crossing outside is a touchdown.
8. If the runner is being held by only one player, let it play; if he is held by two or more, rule forward progress stopped.
9. When in doubt, the runner did not step out of bounds.

## Miscellaneous

1. Side officials don't blow whistles on plays up the middle.
2. Only the covering officials wind the clock on free kicks.
3. No TRY down necessary if time for the game has expired on the touchdown and the team ahead is ahead by three or more points.
4. Only the Head Coach can call a timeout for a challenge. If the Team is inside the red zone (25-yard line) a player can call the timeout for the Head Coach to challenge.
5. Do throw a flag for sideline warning. Call sideline warning at the end of a down without causing an interruption, but be sure the Head Coach has had a prior verbal warning.
6. 5-yard facemask fouls are rare but if it is a grasp and then let go, it can be called. When in question it is a 15-yard foul.

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7. The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next possession. At all other times, the ball is placed where it is. (Exception: If the change of possession occurs on a 4<sup>th</sup> down, running or passing play, the ball will be left at the dead ball spot to begin the next series.)
8. When in doubt on QB pass/fumble, we will rule fumble.
9. Teams must be kept between the numbers, the sidelines and the 25-yard lines during timeouts.
10. 5/5 axiom: In order to adjust the game clock when it has been running, there must be more than a 5 second differential if there is more than 5 minutes remaining in either half. Any time lose due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead ball foul is called, the clock must be adjusted.
11. If you think it is a foul, it is NOT, except against the QB.

## Replay

1. Rulings in the replay booth and rulings on the field should be based on the same philosophies.
2. Pagers will be tested at 2:00 left before the start of the second half.
3. Referee check the phones at 2:00 left in half time.
4. Phones and pager check is at 50:00 before the start of the game.
5. Error on the side of review on any scoring play.

## Personal Fouls

1. If action is deemed to be "fighting", then the player must be disqualified. When in doubt of such actions, the player is not fighting.
2. Contact with the helmet in an attempt to punish is always a foul whether by offense or defense.
3. For late hits away from the ball near the end of the play, lean towards dead-ball foul rather than live-ball foul.
4. When a player is hit after giving himself up, a foul is warranted.
5. Fouls on the runner after the touchdown that are obviously late must be called.
6. Spitting on an opponent requires disqualification.